

Yerington Mine Site Update

Lyon County, Nevada

October, 2002

If you're interested in receiving further information and getting on the Yerington Mine Site mailing list, please see the Point of Contact on the reverse side of this publication.

Welcome to the first issue of the *Yerington Mine Site Update*, a periodic newsletter, published by the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) is part of our community relations plan to inform the public of site conditions and ongoing site closure activities. If you have questions, comments or need additional information, simply call or write a point-of-contact listed on the back of this newsletter or visit the NDEP website:

<http://ndep.state.nv.us/yerington/minesite.htm>.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

This newsletter is one of the first steps in the Community Relations Plan (CRP) for the mine site. The CRP has the flexibility to continually identify community concerns and to respond appropriately. As needed, the plan will be updated to ensure effective communication with the community. Public meetings, the NDEP website and other concerns will be identified, and an appropriate response will quickly be implemented.

THE YERINGTON TECHNICAL WORK GROUP

The Yerington Technical Work Group (YTWG) consists of the Atlantic Richfield Company, NDEP, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, Yerington Paiute Indian Tribe, Walker River Paiute Indian Tribe, Lyon County, City of Yerington, and the office of U.S. Senator Harry Reid. The YTWG currently reviews all site investigation and mine closure activities at the site. The NDEP website for YTWG agendas, minutes and approved technical documents.

WHY WE'RE HERE

Since January 2000, NDEP has been managing the Yerington Mine Site to ensure that environmental concerns are appropriately addressed. Preliminary investigations indicate that shallow groundwater underneath the site has been impacted and the potential exists for surface contamination from years of mining and other activities.

In addition to the potential environmental concerns, a number of safety concerns are also being addressed. It is important to remember that the mine site is primarily **Private Property**. For your safety, please **do not trespass** on mine property. A number of physical and chemical hazards exist, including uneven terrain and chemical solutions used in the mining process.

We are actively headed toward closure of the site. Permanent closure is defined by the Nevada Administrative Code (NAC 445A.367) as "that time in the operating life of a facility when activities for the final stabilization, removal or mitigation of sources are initiated". Site closure will be based, in part, on a number of technical investigations of mine-related effects on human health and the environment. Updates to the progress of these investigations and closure planning will be presented in future editions of this newsletter, the NDEP website and public meetings.

WHAT'S BEEN ACCOMPLISHED

A number of site remediation, closure and management activities at the Yerington Mine have occurred since mine operations ended.

Operation and Upgrades to the Groundwater Management System. The Groundwater Management System has been operational since 1985. There were six pumpback wells and associated evaporation ponds to manage impacted groundwater at the northern edge of the mine site.

System upgrades implemented by Atlantic Richfield Company include: Year-round operations since 1997; evaporation pond improvements and the addition of five new pumpback wells in 1998; new pumps and power supplies in 1999 and 2000; and evaporation pond liner improvements in 1999 and 2001.

Fluid Management System. The primary focus of the fluid management system is to manage fluids draining from the leach pads. Fluids are captured in catchment ponds and pumped back onto the leach pads to allow evaporation to take place. NDEP has been actively managing leach fluids from the five Arimetco copper leach pads since January 2000. After over two years of fluid management on the property, the leach pad drainage rates have dropped from a combined 1,300 gallons per minute to under 100 gallons per minute.

Site Security Upgrades/Site Clean-up. Over the last two years, 1.5 miles of new fence have been installed around the perimeter of the property, and several miles of old fencing have been repaired. At the Arimetco plant, the tops of five ground-level tanks were covered with fencing to minimize the possibility of public access. Clean-up activities at the site have included the collection of drums and transformers for storage in designated areas.

Covering of Dust-Prone Areas. In 2002, NDEP temporarily capped several dust-prone areas to alleviate human health concerns. Twelve inches of compacted oxide tailings were placed over the dust-prone areas to eliminate fugitive dust emissions.

Installation of Two New Groundwater Monitor Wells and Site-Wide Groundwater Monitoring. In June 2002, Atlantic Richfield Company installed two shallow groundwater monitoring wells in areas north and northwest of the mine site. The locations of the two monitoring wells were recommended in 2001 as suitable locations for filling in the existing groundwater monitoring network. These wells, along with domestic wells, were included in the site-wide groundwater elevation measurement and water quality sampling program conducted in late June 2002. Results of these monitoring programs will be incorporated into a future Groundwater Conditions Work Plan to more completely understand groundwater flow and water quality associated with the Yerington Mine.

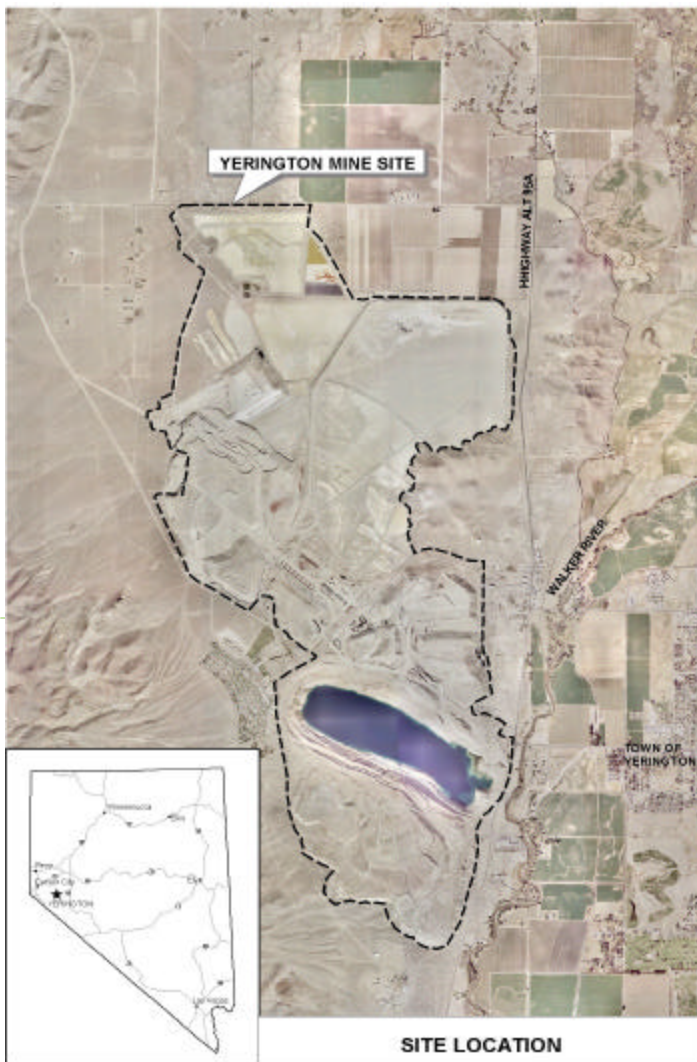
Groundwater monitoring upgrades implemented by the Yerington Paiute Tribe include installation of seven new monitoring wells on the Reservation in 2001 and increased monitoring of other Reservation wells.



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WHAT'S BEEN ACCOMPLISHED - CONTINUED

Collection of Meteorological and Air Monitoring Data: In May 2002, Atlantic Richfield Company installed a meteorological station in the area of the existing pumpback system. This station has been collecting site-specific climate data to assist in the evaluation of the water balance at the Yerington Mine and to support the collection of air quality monitoring data. The station monitors relative humidity and solar radiation. The Yerington Paiute Tribe installed and began operation of air monitors at the reservation and in the colony in March of 2002.

Closure Scope of Work. The Closure Scope of Work (SOW) was approved by the regulatory agencies on May 28, 2002. This document provides the road map for site investigations to demonstrate the physical and chemical stability of the remaining surface mine units, and also help to assess the potential for human health or ecological risk from these mine units or from past operating practices.

HISTORY OF THE YERINGTON MINE SITE

The Anaconda Mining Company, predecessor of the Atlantic Richfield Company, began mining activities at the Yerington Mine site in the early 1950s. From 1953 to 1965, operations at the facility consisted of mining the Yerington Pit for copper oxide ore. The resulting copper precipitate was sent off site for smelting (process using high temperatures to obtain metal). In 1965 the mill and concentrator were built to allow processing of both copper oxide and copper sulfide ores. A copper precipitate was also produced from the sulfide ore and shipped off site for further processing.

Tailings (waste material resulting from the milling process) were placed in a number of on-site tailings ponds. Other process solutions were evaporated in on-site evaporation ponds. The Anaconda Mining Company sold the property in 1978.

Miscellaneous mining and processing occurred on the site from 1978 to 1989, at which time Arimetco began its copper recovery operations. Arimetco built five lined leach pads where acid and other solutions were used to extract copper from copper oxide ore followed by electro plating (production of purified copper using electricity).

After filing for Chapter 11 bankruptcy in January 1997, Arimetco continued its copper recovery operations through November 1999. Arimetco abandoned the site in January 2000 leaving the five leach pads with leach solution still in the system.

The time and location of the public meetings will be announced here.

LOCATIONS OF TECHNICAL INFORMATION FOR THE YERINGTON MINE SITE

Yerington, Nevada
Lyon County Library
20 Nevin Way
Yerington, NV 89447
Phone: (775) 463-6645

State of Nevada
Division of Environmental Protection
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Need More Info?

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